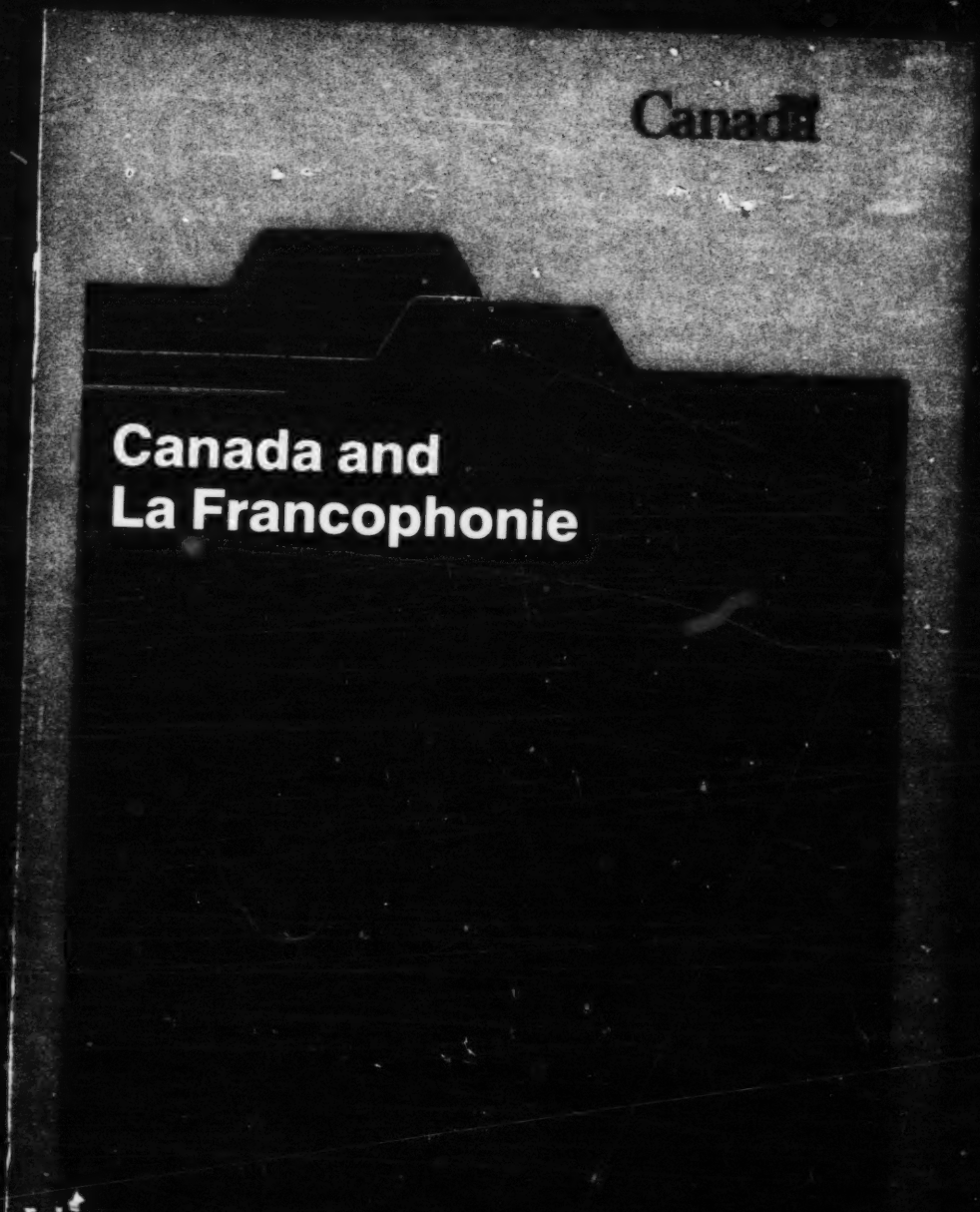

Canada and La Francophonie

REFERENCE
SERIES No. 53

Canada and La Francophonie

Published by Authority of the
Honourable Mark MacGuigan,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
Government of Canada, 1982

Produced by
External Information Programs Division,
Department of External Affairs,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1A 0G2

This pamphlet may be freely reproduced either as a whole or in part. Please note its date. Pamphlets in this series may be obtained from all Canadian embassies, high commissions and consular offices abroad. Requests for copies of *Reference Series* by residents of countries where there are no Canadian representatives should be addressed to the External Information Programs Division, at the address shown above.

For some years, the term "La Francophonie" has been used to describe the movement that is working to provide an organized framework and functional structures of co-operation and exchange for those whose common language is French.

La Francophonie was founded on the French language, which is the basis of communication and promotion of the many francophone national cultures and languages. Although countries participating in the various French-speaking institutions usually have a common linguistic and cultural heritage, they are not necessarily homogeneous from a socio-cultural, political or economic viewpoint. Moreover, the diversity of national cultures and languages represented in the French-speaking community is a dynamic factor in the development of La Francophonie and its activities.

The desire to bring together French-speaking people has led to the creation of several international intergovernmental institutions, of which the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation is the most important, along with non-governmental organizations and associations.

Role of the Canadian government
The Canadian government has been associated with La Francophonie from the outset, having been active in the creation and development of its various institutions. The flourishing French culture in Canada and its expansion abroad have provided considerable motivation for Canadian involvement in La Francophonie which is an extension internationally of Canada's bilingualism policy and constitutes a basic, permanent component of its foreign policy.

In seeking to enhance the rich diversity of Canada, the federal government promotes La Francophonie both domestically and abroad. To this end, it has established a system of bilateral diplomatic representation with all French-speaking countries, produced an extensive development co-operation program, initiated a political dialogue on major international issues and has become a member of all multilateral francophone organizations, namely the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, the Conference of Education Ministers and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports.

Contribution of the provincial governments
The attempt to strengthen francophone ties not only involves the federal government, but is the concern of many Canadians. Quebec took an early interest in La Francophonie and the federal government has encouraged the governments of the other provinces with

large francophone populations to become actively involved. Thus representatives of four provinces—Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba— were part of the Canadian delegation to the founding conference of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation in 1970.

As the main centre of French language and culture in Canada, Quebec from the outset has held a special position in La Francophonie at the government level, having the status of participating government in the Agency. In December 1977, New Brunswick, with 42 per cent of its population French-speaking, petitioned and received from the federal government the same participating-government status.

The important contribution made by the provincial governments, especially Quebec and New Brunswick, is not confined to the activities of the Agency. It also applies to the other governmental institutions such as the Conference of Education Ministers and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports. Indeed, the leader of the Canadian delegation to such ministerial meetings is often a provincial minister speaking on behalf of Canada. In addition, the governments of these provinces are actively involved in the pursuits of the non-governmental francophone organizations.

Participating-government status

In 1971 the federal and Quebec governments agreed on the form of Quebec's participation in Agency institutions, programs and activities. Similar terms were established with New Brunswick in 1977.

Participating-government status allows Quebec and New Brunswick to be specifically identified in the Canadian delegation, to have a seat, an identification plaque and the right to take the floor when deliberations are in progress. They also communicate directly with the Agency on questions of program structure. These two governments contribute financially to the Agency's budget and their contributions are specifically identified though calculated as a portion of Canada's.

There are few such arrangements elsewhere, whereby a federal government grants to the government of a federated or provincial state the status of participating government in an international or regional organization. Communication and consultation arrangements have been established between Quebec, New Brunswick and the federal government, in order to make active, original participation possible for each of them while ensuring unity of action by Canada in the community of Agency members.

Canada and the francophone countries in Europe

Canada has special relations with Belgium, Luxembourg and France and is associated with the French-speaking countries of Europe by means of bilateral and multilateral economic and cultural co-operation, through such bodies as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

France and Belgium have actively contributed to the awareness of the origins of French-Canadian culture, especially over the past 20 years, when there has been an unprecedented number of exchange visits and exchanges of information and cultural property in all fields. To facilitate cultural exchanges between these countries, the Canadian government maintains centres in Paris and Brussels.

Canada's association with these industrialized francophone countries has also made it easier to co-ordinate aid projects and economic and cultural co-operative activities with developing countries. The common language makes such activities more effective in terms of manpower, more adaptable to technological and scientific developments and more intensive because of the special relationships that exist.

Canada and the francophone countries outside Europe

Most of the francophone countries outside Europe have obtained their independence during the past three decades and Canada has attempted to associate with their intellectual and cultural movements as well as with their industrial development. The Canadian government has therefore recognized all newly independent francophone states and has established diplomatic relations with them. In addition Canada has worked to develop significant co-operative relations, especially with the African countries, which numerically make up the largest francophone group.

Canada's relations with the francophone states are very diversified because of their increasingly active role in the major political and economic arenas of the world. These relations, which started in the form of development co-operation, now encompass the following spheres: political (consultation on major contemporary problems); commercial (bilateral trade exchanges); and cultural (exhibitions, film distribution, etc.) Commercial exchanges are expanding as a result of the posting of commercial attachés to an increasing number of Canadian embassies abroad, while cultural exchanges still remain at a fairly low level.

The Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation

In January 1968, the initial steps were taken to establish the concept of La Francophonie at the government level and to make it the basis for a new form of multilateral co-operation. Government leaders from the African and Malagasi Community met and made plans to inaugurate an annual conference of francophone heads of state. To realize this goal, they asked the ministers of education of the countries concerned to meet first and investigate organizational structures of La Francophonie. On February 17, 1969, representatives of 28 francophone countries assembled in Niamey, Niger to hold the first intergovernmental conference and they adopted the principle set forth by these ministers of education to create an agency for cultural and technical co-operation. An acting executive secretary was made responsible for preparing a report on the statutes and possible activities of the future organization, which was to be submitted at the next conference in 1970.

Jean-Marc Léger, a Canadian journalist and Secretary-General of the Association of Partly or Wholly French-language Universities, was named acting executive secretary. He became Secretary-General of the Agency at the second Niamey conference in March 1970. The current Secretary-General, Professor Dan Dicko, a Nigerian, is a former education minister.

In 1981, the Agency comprised 28 member states, including Canada and the two participating governments of Quebec and New Brunswick, and four associate states. Its purpose is to develop relationships of mutual co-operation in the areas of education, culture, and science and technology in order to bind its membership more closely by means of the French language. Thus, without replacing the various types of co-operation that already exist, the Agency aims to serve as the expression of a new solidarity among industrialized and developing countries. It supports its members by assisting in the development and expansion of their respective cultures, fostering mutual understanding among the peoples involved and promoting among them an enlightened outlook toward the cultures represented in the organization.

The Agency is composed of: the *General Conference,* which directs its activities and approves the program (it meets at the ministerial level every two years); the *Board of Directors,* which approves and controls the development of the proposals submitted to it by the members (it meets every year); the *Consultative*

Council, which is responsible for co-operation between the Agency and the many non-governmental francophone agencies; and finally, the *Secretariat,* which is in charge of preparing and implementing the program and producing the budgetary and financial reports.

Canada and the Agency

Canada participates in all the Agency's programs and assists in the scientific and technical fields by developing methods for circulating information rapidly among the members. In addition, Canada desires to maintain the balance between the cultural and technical components of the Agency and, inspired by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, proposed the creation of the Special Development Program in 1975.

Supported by voluntary contributions, the Program studies and carries out modest technical assistance programs suited to the requirements of members of the Agency, mainly in the areas of education, training, research, agriculture, health and social communications. Canada's purpose in creating the Program was to give the Agency added momentum and to respond to needs expressed unanimously by the developing countries, without burdening the Agency's budget. It also wanted to make the Agency an effective instrument of co-operation which would complement larger-scale forms of bilateral and multilateral aid.

The Agency has become a forum for sectoral ministerial meetings, the first of which was a gathering of the ministers of science and technology in Luxembourg in 1977. The second was a meeting of the ministers of justice in Paris in September 1980 and, in March 1981,the agriculture ministers met. In September 1981, the ministers of culture assembled in Cotonou, Dahomey. Further ministerial meetings will be convened this year and in subsequent years.

The Agency is gradually becoming the cornerstone of La Francophonie. One of the Canadian government's objectives is to have the Agency involved to some degree in most of the international activities of La Francophonie.

Ministerial conferences

In addition to co-operating with the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, Canada is involved in two francophone intergovernmental conferences—the Conference of Education Ministers and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports.

The national education ministers of the French-speaking states of Africa and Madagascar met for the first time in Paris in 1960. Today, 26 countries are members of the Conference

of Education Ministers. Its purpose is to better adapt education to the processes of economic and social development of the member countries and to share the benefits of experiments conducted in this area.

Four provinces, Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba, are usually represented on the Canadian delegation to these meetings in accordance with procedures agreed upon with the federal government. In addition, Canada maintains liaison with the agencies attached to this conference, the Permanent Technical Secretariat centred in Dakar, Senegal, and the African and Malagasi Council on Higher Education in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta.

Since 1977, the Secretariat has operated as executive secretariat for both the Conference of Education Ministers and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports. The African and Malagasi Council of Higher Education, on the other hand, a specialized body of the Conference of Education Ministers, has its own secretariat and structure.

The Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports met initially in Paris in December 1969. At that time, it was composed of a majority of the French-speaking countries of Africa and Madagascar, along with Belgium and Canada. Today its membership comprises 27 countries. Originally there was a common desire among the participants to work together for a policy which would provide encouragement and a favourable environment for young people in their respective countries. In recent years, principally by means of a major annual action program, the conference has been concentrating more on producing instructors and group leaders who will provide various types of training in the two sectors concerned. As with the Conference of Education Ministers, the Canadian delegation includes representatives from Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba.

Non-governmental francophone associations

La Francophonie grew internationally out of the many non-governmental francophone associations, some of which date back 40 years. Most of them had a professional base, such as the International Association of French-speaking Parliamentarians, the Institute of Freedom of Expression in French, and the World Association of French-speaking Physicians. Others were formed for the sake of achieving common goals, such as the Association of Partly or Wholly French-language Universities, the International Council of the French language, the Council on French Life in America, Richelieu International, and more recently, the International Council of

French-language Radio and Television, created by Canadian initiative in Montreal in 1978.

The establishment of the Agency, rather than nullifying their activities, has brought new life to some non-governmental associations and has led to the birth of new ones. The wide diversity of fields in which these organizations are involved, coupled with the multitude of programs and activities initiated by them, adds a significant dimension that takes La Francophonie far beyond the government sector, making it even more dynamic. For this reason, the Canadian government supports several of these associations that are either Canadian in origin or where there is considerable Canadian participation. The support takes the form of annual subsidies or contributions made for congresses, symposiums or seminars in which Canadian professionals are participating. At a time when co-operation among peoples and cultures is constantly increasing, international non-governmental organizations are assuming more importance, and such contributions are intended to provide tangible encouragement to the various groups of Canadians who are actively involved in international affairs.